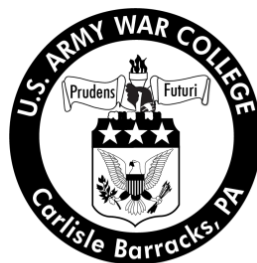


Civilian Research Project Senior Service College Fellow

The 6,000 Mile Screwdriver is Getting Longer: Washington's Strengthening Grip

by

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United States Army War College
Class of 2012

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**THE 6,000 MILE SCREWDRIVER IS GETTING LONGER:
WASHINGTON'S STRENGTHENING GRIP**

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U.S. theater commanders since at least the Civil War have complained of undue monitoring and interference from Washington during wartime. Civil-military theory aside on the prerogatives of elected leaders or the autonomy of field commanders, technological advances over the past couple of decades have created the conditions by which Washington can increasingly maintain closer contact with generals in the field. The same tools field commanders use to track their subordinates are also being used by their political masters. In particular, the secure video teleconference has become the tool of choice by which theater commanders are increasingly brought into the formal National Security Council meetings at the Deputies and Principal Committee level as well as into full NSC meetings chaired by the President. Frequent policy interactions between decision-makers in Washington and their commanders in the field, even if buffered by the Office of Secretary of Defense, the Joint Staff, and the combatant commands, will be the norm for any future conflicts or interventions. As such, Army senior commanders today should learn the lessons from the past ten years and be prepared to provide frequent assessments ever more directly in the future to the entire military and civilian chain of command.

THE 6,000 MILE SCREWDRIVER IS GETTING LONGER: WASHINGTON'S STRENGTHENING GRIP

Senior U.S. military leaders since at least the Civil War have groused about interference from our nation's capital during wartime. Technological advances in global communications, however, have provided the means through which Washington can increasingly maintain closer contact with generals in the field. Like tracer fire, technology works in both directions, allowing commanders not only to communicate more efficiently down to their subordinates but also up to their political masters. In particular, the secure video teleconference (SVTC) has become the tool of choice by which theater commanders are pulled into the policy and strategic discussions, to include not only into formal National Security Council (NSC) meetings chaired by the President but also increasingly into NSC meetings at the Deputies and Principal Committee levels.¹ At a minimum, given current and likely advances in communications technology, frequent policy interactions between decision-makers in Washington and U.S. commanders in theater, even when buffered by the military chain of command, will be the norm for any future conflicts or humanitarian interventions.

With an emphasis on Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation New Dawn, this research paper will first review the improvements in global communications that have eased the process of conducting meaningful meetings among participants separated by great distances. Next, the pertinent civil-military theory that governs relations between elected political leaders and the armed forces of the United States will be reviewed to provide context for the increasing ease of interaction between them during wartime. Related to civil-military theories, the contemporary policy environment will be reviewed,

to include a first-hand look at the policy process inside the NSC staff; changes emphasizing “jointness” in the armed forces brought about by the Goldwater-Nichols legislation of 1986 will also be reviewed as the post-9/11 period has presented the first sustained wartime test of the new organizational concept.

The tenure of each of the five theater commanders in Iraq will be briefly examined to gain an appreciation of the pressures the technological advances in communications and political dynamics placed on each of them as they communicated directly with Washington. Finally, the paper will conclude by exploring several implications for future commanders given the likely direction of the communications environment.

Technological Tools

The advances in communications technology that have given us the smart phone in the past decade have, not surprisingly, spread to the policy process as well. Policy development and wartime management no longer rely on telegrams, letters, formal State Department cables, or facsimile transmissions. Rather, new tools such as electronic mail and video conferencing have emerged to supplant the older forms. While technological advances have always tended to speed communications once implemented, the jump between the telegram-to-the-telephone era and the telephone-to-the-video conference era has occurred considerably faster. A tangible example comes from our nation’s interventions in Iraq. When the order to begin Operation Desert Storm was given in 1991, having been approved by the 41st President, George H.W. Bush, it was conveyed by a telephone call from the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Colin Powell, to General Norman Schwarzkopf, the commander-in-

chief² of Central Command (CENTCOM), who was forward deployed in Saudi Arabia. The phone call was followed up with a faxed copy of the execution order.³

Just 12 years later, the order to execute Operation Iraqi Freedom was given by the 43rd President, George W. Bush, as he chaired a full National Security Council meeting via a secure teleconference with General Tommy Franks, who was then running the Central Command forward headquarters in Qatar.⁴ The video-teleconference provides essentially the same service, albeit via a secure link, as the applications Skype, Apple's "FaceTime," Tandberg, and similar other video communications tools used in the civilian and commercial sectors.⁵ The benefit of this forum is that it allows participants to pick up on moods and interact during the meeting in ways that resemble being in the same room together⁶, even when separated by thousands of miles and many time zones.⁷ Bandwidth issues certainly marred these conferences in their infancy and led to many instances of the dreaded "frozen screen" and lost uplinks, but the bugs have generally been worked out of the system after years of practical application during the War on Terror.⁸

The two examples above only speak to the commencement of combat operations. If a campaign becomes enduring, day-to-day responsibility is typically ceded to a theater commander as the combatant command pulls back to re-focus on its broader area of responsibility.⁹ The establishment of the new theater command obviously adds one additional layer to the reporting chain. Yet, policymakers in Washington, accustomed to getting a direct feed from the battlefield, suffer no diminution in their appetite for information. Consequently, the establishment of the theater command places new stress on the military chain of command because the

best-informed feed now comes from a subordinate of the combatant commander rather than the combatant commander himself.

In the broader example of Iraq, all five theater commanders – Lieutenant General Ricardo Sanchez, General George Casey, General David Petraeus, General Raymond Odierno, and General Lloyd Austin – faced the same structural dynamic of being pulled into White House meetings via secure teleconference, with each meeting requiring at least some degree of coordination with Central Command (CENTCOM), the Joint Staff, and the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD). Before further examining this structural dynamic and its current policy application, some context from the history of civil-military relations in the United States must be provided.

Civil-Military Considerations

The theater commanders of the war in Iraq faced new technological reach from the White House but inherited a nearly fixed set of civil-military principles. The normative code of American civil-military relations that frames their policy interactions began, in many ways, at the Republic's beginning. As commander in chief of the Continental Army, George Washington established the American precepts of civilian control of the military. Having the broad mandate required to fight the war, Washington made it clear that his command "was dependent upon, and subordinate to, the will of the American citizenry as represented in the Continental Congress."¹⁰ Washington's example encoded in the DNA of the armed forces what was considered proper civil-military behavior from the military side of the equation.

The baseline was that America's armed forces, situated in a liberal republic, were to be obedient to the wishes of their civilian political masters, and as such, subject to the passing whims of the public and their elected leaders. Many liberal thinkers considered

the armed forces as an oppressive tool of the executive, a tool that had to be carefully constrained and vigilantly watched. The separation of powers in our government was designed to be a check on the potential excesses of the executive. Stemming from John Locke's ontological construct, faith was to be placed in the legislative body rather than a single sovereign, and more importantly, the people had the right to depose the government if it failed to uphold its role as a trustee of life, liberty and property.¹¹ Of course Locke's vision most animated the American founders, who took the ideas of life, liberty and property and encoded them in the Declaration of Independence and Constitution.

During the framing of our republic, Alexander Hamilton argued for a small national army due to threats as well as to serve as a type of unifying force across the diverse States. Hamilton posited that:

Safety from external danger is the most powerful director of national conduct. Even the ardent love of liberty will, after a time, give way to its dictates. The violent destruction of life and property incident to war, the continual effort and alarm attendant on a state of continual danger, will compel nations the most attached to liberty to resort for repose and security to institutions which have a tendency to destroy their civil and political rights. To be more safe, they at length become willing to run the risk of being less free.¹²

For these reasons, Hamilton advocated a "permanent corps in the pay of the government." While recognizing that this was precisely a standing army, he saw it as more likely to provide the needed protection as well as being markedly more reliable than citizen militias from the various states. The power of the government purse and the division of oversight between the legislative and executive branches would also keep the army in its place.¹³

James Madison likewise agreed that a standing army was necessary, given that the United States could not control the ambitions of other states. Madison suggested a pecuniary tie on the military, requiring its budget to be approved by the legislature annually. A final portion of his reasoning was that the militia was still capable of defeating a despotic army should that evil occasion arise.¹⁴

Still, Hamilton recognized early on that, “[i]t is the nature of war to increase the executive at the expense of the legislative authority” and although this proposition would not be tested for many years, its basic premise rings true.¹⁵ The persuasive Federalists carried the day and saw their Constitution enacted with provision for a *small* standing army and an initially coastal-oriented navy.

The American armed forces received a firm liberal imprint from the debates over the Constitution and eventually the brief document itself. The bias against a large standing army, rather than an expansible force, and its pernicious effect on liberty was so strong that it was more than 150 years under that Constitution before there stood a large one on American (and European and Asian) soil. Due mostly to territorial fortune, the liberal imprint lay undisturbed until nearly halfway into the Twentieth Century, even though the Navy had embraced a more internationalist role far earlier than the nation’s land force. Changes in the relative power of the United States vis-à-vis the international system prompted deep debates during the Twentieth Century, and more recently during the War on Terror, as to the liberal character of the U.S. armed forces.¹⁶

Samuel Huntington intimated that, “a gap has always existed between the ideals in which Americans believed and the institutions that embodied their practice.”¹⁷ A military force, as Huntington observes elsewhere, has “functional imperatives that

conflict most sharply and dramatically with the liberal democratic values of the American Creed.”¹⁸ Huntington’s observation fits somewhat with realist international relations theory, which, given the post-World War II balance of power, helps explain the pressure on the U.S. to fulfill the role of leading power and derivatively the pressure on the U.S. armed forces to support that role.

A realist approach suggests that all states will have militaries with certain capabilities and that over time they will learn and emulate other successful militaries.¹⁹ Certainly, this is the case with the American armed forces. Over its history, the U.S. military copied many procedures and tactics from the French, British, Germans, and Russians.

The connection between the armed forces and the state can be derived at least partially from proto-realist Thomas Hobbes’ thought experiment as to the nature of society, in which Hobbes clearly links the executive power with the force of arms. Naturally the military organization’s status, roles, and missions become intricately entwined with the success and failure of the state itself. Nearly any serious military, and the modern U.S. military in particular, is therefore characterized best as seeing itself in a Hobbesian world of all against all, which tends to build a predisposition towards the worst case scenario and a deep strain of conservatism into the organization.

This self-image was reinforced by the armed force’s close affiliation with the systemic threat environment, especially throughout the Cold War. Consequently, over time, American civil-military relations, which began with and retain a firm liberal predisposition, nonetheless have come under pressure from the realist side of the

equation as the U.S. role in the world has expanded exponentially over the past century. That tension animates most contemporary debates in the field.

For the most part, American civil-military norms remain firmly within what the first commander-in-chief, who not coincidentally was also a former general, established as an enduring legacy.²⁰ Still, many academics warn of abuse, most typically from the military side of the divide.²¹ While the literature on American civil military relations runs deep, only two notable incidents of significant insubordination at the highest levels come to mind, those of Major General George McClellan in the Civil War and General Douglas MacArthur in the Korean war. The example of Union General George McClellan's contentious relationship with President Lincoln remains perhaps the lowest point in the history of U.S. civil-military relations. McClellan took Lincoln's "meddling" so personally that he eventually ran against Lincoln in the 1864 election.²²

In the other example, General MacArthur, perhaps having served a bit too long in uniform, was removed due to differences with the President over how to deal with a Chinese intervention in Korea. This was compounded by his somewhat open disdain for President Truman as well. MacArthur also flirted with a presidential bid, only to be passed up by his former subordinate, General Eisenhower.²³ In each case, Presidents Lincoln and Truman, respectively, fired the commanders after giving each general adequate opportunity to reform. In retrospect, Lincoln is seen as a master strategist and Truman's strategic reputation, low at the time he left office, has improved steadily over time.

The purpose of this research paper, however, is not to rehash esoteric debates in civil-military relations theory, which as Richard Betts argues, is a perennial tension in

American politics but hardly ever a crisis.²⁴ Rather, this essay is designed to look at the increasing pressures commanders will come under from any Administration exercising control of military operations given the technological advances in communications. Some additional context must be provided regarding the contemporary policy environment before examining the pressures each commander in Iraq faced and implications for future commanders.

Policy Formulation in the Joint Environment

The process by which civilian leaders produce policy, with the input of the military, relies heavily on the system designed in the aftermath of the Second World War. The National Security Act of 1947 laid the foundation of today's policy structure by establishing the Department of Defense and the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Central Intelligence Agency, and the formal National Security Council.²⁵ Today's contemporary NSC is defined by the White House as follows:

The National Security Council (NSC) is the President's principal forum for considering national security and foreign policy matters with his senior national security advisors and cabinet officials. Since its inception under President Truman, the Council's function has been to advise and assist the President on national security and foreign policies. The Council also serves as the President's principal arm for coordinating these policies among various government agencies. The NSC is chaired by the President. Its regular attendees (both statutory and non-statutory) are the Vice President, the Secretary of State, the Secretary of the Treasury, the Secretary of Defense, and the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff is the statutory military advisor to the Council, and the Director of National Intelligence is the intelligence advisor.²⁶

Beyond the formally defined membership of the NSC lay a multitude of staffers, in the various executive agency departments such as Defense and State. Most pertinent to the topic of this essay is the staff at the White House, primarily on the NSC staff, which was merged with the staff of the Homeland Security Council that was

created in October 2001 in the wake of the September 11, 2001 attacks; the new entity is known as the National Security Staff (NSS).²⁷

Some scholars point to the rise of the national security state and suggest that the professional staff of the NSC exercise agenda setting power and an inscrutable amount of influence over foreign policy, while remaining an establishment that is largely unknown to the broader public.²⁸ Indeed, the public typically only becomes aware of the NSC staff during times of scandal.²⁹ For the most part, despite vilification of “the government” by numerous pundits, the professional members of the NSC staff are loyal, hardworking citizens seeking to advance the common interest, just like other members of federal, state, and local governments.

The staffers at the NSC are nonetheless under enormous pressure from their bosses, the National Security Advisor and the Deputy National Security Advisor, who confer with the President on a daily basis. NSC staffers are required to provide daily updates on their portfolios via email to the National Security Advisor each morning prior to the Presidential Daily Briefing. Staffers also prepare the National Security Advisor and the Deputy for meetings with Principals and Deputies.

At the staffer level, preparation for substantial Deputies and Principals Committee meetings includes routine interagency coordination. Issues are typically vetted prior to Deputies and Principals meetings in Interagency Policy Committee meetings, which are run by senior directors and directors on the NSC staff and focused on recurring geographic or functional issues. In the Iraq example, the NSC staff ran a weekly Interagency Policy Committee that featured attendance by the pertinent members of the government working on Iraq in Washington, such as the Deputy

Assistant Secretary of State in the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs for Iraq issues, the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for the Middle East, the Joint Staff J-5 Middle East Division chief, and others from agencies with Iraq equities such as Treasury, USAID, the Office of Management and Budget, the U.S. Mission to the United Nations.³⁰ These weekly meetings were also typically attended via SVTC by someone from Embassy Baghdad, frequently the ambassador or deputy chief of mission. The formal IPC meeting structure was reinforced throughout any given week by phone calls, email, or other teleconferences as required by events or policy development.

In general, the NSC staff should engage with its top-level counterparts, e.g. those named above as part of the Iraq IPC. In theory, this arrangement insulates military leaders in theater as staffers in the Office of the Secretary of Defense's policy office, with the assistance of the Joint Staff, field the NSC staff's queries for information. Practically, in the case of Iraq policy, this meant that no military participation was authorized in the Iraq IPC below that of the Joint Staff, either from CENTCOM or Iraq, under the premise that the subordinate commanders were busy fighting the war and that the Joint Staff could adequately represent their positions while also being savvy in the ways of Washington.

The pressure on theater commanders increases, however, as specific, tough issues elevate to the Deputies' and Principals' levels. In their respective meetings, Deputies and Principals almost always want to get the "direct feed" from the battlefield, which means that the Iraq commander and the ambassador were invited to participate in Iraq-related meetings. This invitation for military field participation, with the expectation that it would be approved, would be forwarded to the Vice Chairman of the

Joint Chiefs of Staff for Deputies meetings and to the Chairman for Principals. While the general rule of thumb was that policy issues should be solved at the lowest level possible, and indeed many Iraq policy issues were solved either at the IPC or Deputies level, the toughest issues, such as the surge, the drawdown of forces, and consideration of a follow-on security agreement with Iraq, required Principals to grapple with the pros and cons and make a recommendation to the President, who — with the accumulated debate on the issue presented cogently to him — ultimately made the decision..

Meetings at the Deputies, Principals, and NSC-level typically require discussion papers, which are generally written by NSC staffers. On occasion papers from State or Defense are used in the packets put together as read-ahead materials for the meeting participants. The coordination of the discussion papers followed the same model as the meetings themselves. The tougher the issue, the harder it was to write a discussion paper that all agencies find fair and fulsome. This difficulty in coordination, done primarily over secure email but at times in person or via secure Tandberg, can actually reduce coordination as all parties cannot be satisfied all the time. In cases like this, the discussion paper defaults to flagging the differences in opinion that exist. Those differences should then be aired during the actual meeting.

These coordination arrangements seem to be fully in accord with the policies promulgated under the Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986, which emphasized service jointness, strengthened the role of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, added the Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, elevated the role of the combatant commanders, and de-emphasized the individual services and their

secretaries and chiefs.³¹ The strengthening of the combatant commands at the expense of the services is perhaps the most notable facet of Goldwater-Nichols related to the pressure put on command and control as related to technology. The combatant commander is formally in the chain of command, reporting to the Secretary of Defense and the President. In practice, however, during a sustained campaign, the theater commander (e.g., the Commander of Multi-National Force/U.S. Forces Iraq) had the best information on Iraq while the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff had the similarly best-informed military view from Washington along with daily access to the Secretary of Defense. This often left the combatant commander as the odd man out.

As such, in many of the higher-level meetings on Iraq the commander of CENTCOM was displayed on a smaller SVTC screen off to the side of the large screen in the center projecting the Iraq commander and the ambassador, to some degree relegating him to providing some regional views based on his travel, or, worst case, being asked at the end of the meeting, “do you have anything to add?” after policy makers had spent the bulk of the meeting talking to the participants in Baghdad or to those around the table in Washington attending the meeting in person.³²

The call by policy makers for field participation in Deputies and Principals level meetings on tough issues is to be expected, and, perhaps, even welcomed as an opportunity for field commanders to make their case. Beyond the debate required on tough issues is the more insidious intersection of the policy makers’ daily desire for information and the need for the military chain of command to coordinate an internal position. Technology exacerbates this pressure point.

Absent the weight of two centuries of civil-military theory and practice, the less hierarchical State Department in general provided fewer strictures on the flow of information to the White House. The ambassador to Iraq, for example, provided a daily email to the NSC and Vice President's staffs, putting on the carbon copy line his colleagues at Foggy Bottom. This email, particularly during the extended period of Iraq's government formation in 2010 and 2011, frequently formed the basis of daily update to the National Security Advisor. There was no equivalent daily push from the military side of the equation, although the theater's daily battle update briefing could be pulled from the CENTCOM secure website by NSC staffers, who hopefully had enough service in Iraq to convey adequate context for whatever point gleaned from the slides.

Breaking news, on the other hand, such as large casualty producing attacks that made news in the United States, typically required a quick email update to the National Security Advisor. To generate this update, the NSC staffer would reach out to his counterparts at the Office of the Secretary of Defense and the Joint Staff, who would in turn reach down for more information. Although the temptation for the NSC staffer to call or email Baghdad directly was mighty, the building of good rapport with staffers in the Pentagon and the explanation of what information was needed and to who it would go for the most part would produce information to be sent to the front office in a sufficiently quick manner.

Even with the advances in technology, there remains some flavor in the Pentagon and on the NSC staff that the process is barely making the transformation from the industrial age to the information era. The physical structures established World War II and its aftermath are straining as the institutions they house learn to cope with

multitudes of new information. Policy still moves through the White House in packets compiled of paper copies, even though replicated electronically on a secure web based portal, and formal Deputies and Principals level meeting read-ahead materials are still sent by facsimile rather than by electronic mail. These systems will continue to evolve. The one constant will be that individual relationships must be built and trust developed so that technology doesn't sabotage basic courtesy and good business practices.

Theater Commanders in Iraq

Five Army generals served as theater commander over the course of U.S. involvement in Iraq. Each dealt with the advances in communications technology and faced similar pressures to report to Washington. Each also took experience and a common approach to the world born of their time as junior and mid-grade officers in the post-Vietnam period and late-Cold War.³³ An enormous, if different, burden was placed on each commander as he was thrust head first into a contentious Washington policy environment during wartime. The following vignettes are designed to capture briefly the role communications technology played during each commander's tour, with some emphasis on the conditioning political variables.

A four-star commander for the Iraq theater of operations, was not appointed until well over one year after the initial invasion. The slowness in appointing a senior Army general to this post was caused by multiple factors, chief among them the residual memory of Desert Storm's rapid withdrawal, some amount of political desire to speed the drawdown, and an operating theory that Americans were irritant Iraq's Arab population and thus, the sooner U.S. forces withdrew the better.³⁴

Prior to the appointment of a four star commander, U.S. forces in Iraq were commanded by LTG Ricardo Sanchez, who, at the time, was the most junior three star

general in the Army.³⁵ Despite Sanchez's lack of seniority, he was thrust into politically fraught decision space to which he had not been exposed as had other officers with senior-level tours in Washington. To compound matters, the talent and large staffs of both CENTCOM and its subordinate Coalition Forces Land Component Command began to withdraw from theater just as he took command on June 14, 2003, taking with them the continuity and expertise that would be direly needed to conduct support and stability operations.³⁶

Sanchez also operated in a difficult political environment, under Secretary Rumsfeld.³⁷ Furthermore, Sanchez had to work closely with the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) and its leader, Paul "Jerry" Bremer, who was originally appointed also to work for Secretary Rumsfeld and with whom Sanchez had a difficult relationship, particularly after Bremer's de-Ba'athification order, which was considered a major contributor to the insurgency.³⁸ Over time the CPA became a more independent entity, reporting more to the NSC than to Secretary Rumsfeld, hampering unity of command in Iraq.³⁹ Technology enabled both Bremer and Sanchez to interact routinely, in a face-to-face manner with both the Secretary of Defense and the larger White House NSC community, although the technology was still suffering from fits and starts in the early years.⁴⁰

Many phones calls were still used in lieu of SVTCs, but one key subordinate of Sanchez at the time, then Major General Martin Dempsey who currently serves as the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, noted that he was constantly being pulled into NSC meetings in Washington via SVTC.⁴¹ In the end, technology played a neutral role in the campaign at the time. As the dust from "shock and awe" settled, it became clear

that the air phase of the campaign had no lasting effect other than to destroy infrastructure needed during reconstruction and help topple the regime. This toppling of course fundamentally reordered Iraq's political system by empowering the majority Shi'a population and helped to generate a Sunni Arab insurgency that could not accept this shift in power. Other outside agents, primarily al-Qa'ida, augmented the Sunni unrest, and Iran took full advantage of the situation by arming, training, and equipping anti-Coalition Shi'a militias.⁴²

LTG Sanchez had to fight not only this battle in Iraq, but also the pressure from Washington to claim victory and draw down U.S. forces quickly, a predisposition that ensured he would never receive adequate resources for his theater. Having changed command a few days earlier, Sanchez left Iraq on July 4, 2004.⁴³

The Army attempted to remedy the problem of Sanchez's lack of seniority by sending its number two ranking officer to assume command. General George Casey, who was serving as Vice Chief of Staff of the Army, served as the Multi-National Force-Iraq (MNF-I) commander from June 28, 2004 to February 10, 2007, the longest serving theater commander of the war. He had a keen appreciation of the political dynamics in Washington given his service not only as Vice Chief but also as the J-5 and Director of the Joint Staff in the run-up to the 2003 invasion of Iraq.⁴⁴ Consequently he knew Secretary Rumsfeld and understood the political environment with more depth than did LTG Sanchez.

General Casey inherited an Iraq that was still reeling from the invasion and lack of services some 15 months later, with an insurgency gaining strength. He also inherited the same pressure to reduce the U.S. presence and role in Iraq. Casey

entered Iraq as the transfer of sovereignty took place, alongside Ambassador Negroponte, a seasoned State Department diplomat and, at a similar, if not higher, level of seniority as Casey.⁴⁵ Together they began the process of normalizing the war and occupation, and the technology improved with weekly meetings with President Bush and the full NSC that would continue throughout Casey's tenure.

To some extent, one can argue that General Casey did as well as he could have in resisting political pressure and kept a sufficient number of troops in Iraq to prevent an all-out descent into civil war, which became an evident possibility after the bombing of the Golden Dome Mosque in Samara in February 2006.⁴⁶ To some extent, however, Casey's emphasis remained on the transition to Iraqi control, even if his concept was more gradual than what the Bush Administration desired. General Casey developed a good rapport with his chain of command in Washington, undoubtedly with the help of his frequent SVTCs, phone calls, and visits.⁴⁷ This rapport and the *formal* communications procedures did not help him once outsiders entered the political system *informally* advocating for a change in strategy and a surge in troops.⁴⁸

General Petraeus took command from General Casey on February 10, 2007, under difficult circumstances, given nearly a year of low-grade civil war in Iraq and a loss of support for the war at home.⁴⁹ Petraeus put a new strategy in place. The surge of troops was the most visible sign of the change in strategy, which emphasized securing the population rather than transitioning to Iraqi control. The counterinsurgency theory that underlay this approach was re-discovered by the Army and published in an updated field manual just prior to Petraeus's tenure.⁵⁰

Recognized as a master communicator, Petraeus understood the various audiences to which he had to communicate: the White House, the Pentagon, and Washington writ large via SVTC; the Congress via testimony and congressional delegation visits, the troops via messages and battlefield circulation, the American public via the press and through reports done by think tank visitors and others to Iraq.

A prolific emailer, Petraeus worked all of these audiences constantly, while remaining focused on the core principles of what the change in strategy meant.⁵¹ With an additional five brigade combat teams and a peak of 170,000 U.S. troops, Petraeus's effort was resourced at levels far beyond his predecessors. U.S. and coalition troops were backed by an increasing number of Iraq Security Forces. Petraeus was also supported by a team of talented leaders on the ground, including then LTG Ray Odierno, in charge of the majority of U.S. troops conducting operations; then LTG Stanley McChrystal in charge of special operations forces who targeted the most irreconcilable actors on both sides of the Sunni-Shi'a spectrum; and then LTG Martin Dempsey and later LTG James Dubik, in the Multi-National Security Transition Command-Iraq effort to train and equip Iraqi Security Forces. This leadership team and the resources at their disposal allowed Petraeus to remain focused on his big principles and dedicate his energy to dealing with the Iraqi leadership and with Washington, alongside Ambassador Ryan Crocker.

Petraeus also benefitted from a change in the Secretary of Defense as Robert Gates replaced Secretary Rumsfeld after severe Republican losses in the November 2006 election, which was somewhat related to unfavorable public perception of the U.S. effort in Iraq.⁵² With adequate resources, talented leaders, and communications savvy

on his side, Petraeus's approach took full advantage of incipient movements in Iraq, in particularly the Sunni Arab Awakening against al-Qa'ida in Iraq and the ceasefire by Shi'a Arab militias, to reduce violence and establish space for Iraq's political leaders to help frame their new state.

He maintained a steady feed of progress on the ground to the White House with briefings by him and Ambassador Crocker to an NSC meeting chaired by the President every Monday. He conducted bi-weekly SVTCs with the Secretary of Defense, in addition to submitting a written report on a weekly basis.⁵³ The September 10-11, 2007 testimony to the Congress proved the high-water mark of media interest in Iraq; during that testimony, Petraeus and Crocker were able to demonstrate some amount of progress in helping the American effort in Iraq move forward, which in turn helped siphon some of the venom out of the debate during a campaign year.⁵⁴ In Petraeus's case, communications technology helped advance the U.S. effort in Iraq because of his mastery of all facets of it, but, without measurable progress, on the ground his reporting skills would have been all for naught.

With only a brief break after commanding Multi-National Corps-Iraq for fifteen months during the surge, General Ray Odierno returned to Iraq to succeed General Petraeus as the MNF-I commander. He served as the most senior Iraq commander for two years, from September 16, 2008 until September 1, 2010, the second longest serving commander behind Casey.⁵⁵ He was also the only officer to serve as a division, corps, and Multi-National Force commander during Operation Iraqi Freedom. Although Odierno seemed a natural fit to succeed Petraeus, the shuffle and quick timeline were due to comments made in an interview that the CENTCOM commander, Admiral Fallon,

gave in which he intimated that he was all that stood between the Bush Administration and war with Iran.⁵⁶ Fallon resigned, to be replaced by Petraeus at CENTCOM, who, in turn was backfilled by Odierno in Iraq.

Odierno's task was to consolidate the success of the surge. He inherited the same communications structures that were already in place and continued the weekly SVTC updates to President Bush. These structures were tested, however, with the transition of Administration upon the inauguration of President Obama in January 2009. Having campaigned to end the war in Iraq, Obama directed his national security team on his first full day in office to undertake a comprehensive review of U.S. strategy in Iraq.⁵⁷ President Obama presented the results of that review during a speech at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina on February 27, 2009 in which he announced the goals of ending combat operations and drawing down troops.

The most notable pieces of planning guidance in this speech were that "by August 31, 2010, our combat mission in Iraq will end" and that the force that remained at that point would "be made up of 35-50,000 U.S. troops."⁵⁸ In addition, a troop plus-up in Afghanistan was ordered, which put additional pressure on the pace and scope of the Iraq drawdown. The weekly full NSC meetings on Iraq were scaled back after the Camp Lejeune speech. In their stead were a series of Deputies and Principals meetings on the drawdown in the fall of 2009 and spring of 2010. Vice President Biden was given lead responsibility for the Administration for Iraq and also began conducting monthly Principals-level meetings on Iraq, although these meetings were focused more on the enduring relationships being built between Iraq and the United States along diplomatic, economic, and cultural lines.⁵⁹

During the series of drawdown meetings, considerable pressure was exerted to pull General Odierno and Ambassador Chris Hill into the lower-level Deputies gatherings. Typically, Odierno and Hill would also attend the Principals level meetings that followed the Deputies review of any given topic in addition to the Vice President's monthly meeting on Iraq. As General Odierno left command in Iraq, combat operations had ended and U.S. forces were just under 50,000, clearly meeting the President's guidance.⁶⁰

The difficult task of conducting the remainder of the drawdown was placed on the shoulders of General Lloyd Austin as he took command from Odierno on September 1, 2010.⁶¹ In conjunction with President Obama's guidance to responsibly end the war in Iraq, the drawdown of the remainder of American forces by the end of 2011 was stipulated by the security agreement between Iraq and the United States signed during the Bush Administration.⁶² Having led the march on Baghdad in 2003 as a brigadier general, Austin was now charged both with planning the drawdown of all U.S. forces and with planning for a potential follow-on U.S. military presence. Austin came to the job in a manner similar to Odierno, having served as a corps commander in Iraq, although his division command was in Afghanistan.

Of all the commanders, he perhaps came under the greatest amount of pressure from a White House empowered by communications technologies. As the debates over a potential follow-on force commenced, Austin and Ambassador James Jeffrey were routinely pulled into meetings at the NSC, Principals, and Deputies levels, and even below.⁶³ The Vice President's monthly meetings also continued, along with a significant number of visits and phone calls by the Vice President and other senior Administration

officials who urged the Iraqis to complete government formation. The planning to draw forces down from 50,000 to zero was considerably more difficult than going from 150,000 to 50,000, given that all of the infrastructure, road clearance, aviation, engineers, bases, transportation, and logistics had to be moved out of country, transferred to the Iraqis, or transferred, in some instances, to the U.S. Embassy's control to support the stay-behind diplomatic presence.

At the end of the day, the issues of immunities and privileges for any follow-on U.S. military mission, which would require the approval of Iraq's parliament, became the key sticking point, with democratically elected Iraqi leaders registering the *vox populi* that stood markedly against a continued American military presence and signaling that such a measure could not pass.⁶⁴ Consequently, the final U.S. forces, other than a small Office of Security Cooperation under the ambassador, departed Iraq on December 16, 2011, some 3,192 number of days after the commencement of hostilities. Upon General Austin's arrival at Joint Base Andrews, President Obama attended a ceremony in which the U.S. Forces-Iraq colors were retired.⁶⁵

With the exception of LTG Sanchez, each of the theater commanders in Iraq was promoted to another four-star billet of greater responsibility. Sanchez was in line for a fourth star and tour at Southern Command, only to have his nomination pulled due to Administration worries about the optics associated with the Abu Ghraib scandal.⁶⁶

It is hard to make any grand generalizations as each of these commanders faced different situations – from gaining an understanding of how hard occupation would be to battling a developing insurgency to applying the maximum number of resources to halt a civil war to shepherding a transition in administration to completing the drawdown of

forces. One broad point does emerge apropos to the civil-military discussion: across five separate theater commanders, all of whom had intimate and frequent contact with their civilian bosses in the Pentagon and the White House, there does not appear to be any incidents for civil-military alarmists to seize upon. Rather, the five senior commanders in Iraq all adhered to General Washington's legacy and the strictest principles of professionalism in providing their advice to the chain of command. The example these officers set is worthy of emulation as senior commanders in future contingencies will be under increasing pressure to communicate with Washington routinely.

Implications for the Next Contingency Operation

The technology that has produced the secure video teleconference is not good or evil in itself. It is merely a tool that allows us to communicate faster and easier. Faster and easier does not necessarily mean more effective communication though. One drawback is that the time to ponder the older forms of communication engendered is lost in what can become the grind of providing daily, or on occasion, more frequent, routine updates simply because the technology allows it. Senior leaders are aware of this trend and instinctively guard it against it as they command their units.⁶⁷ The following implications are offered to help raise awareness in dealing with the pressure on commanders that comes from the upper, political side of the dynamic.

The first implication for commanders is obvious, namely that they should be prepared to brief the entire chain of command, to include the President, via existing or future technologies. Presenting facts on the ground skillfully is not always a natural talent. No one expects commanders to undertake theatrical training in order to make a

compelling presentation, but most leaders can benefit from rehearsals prior to the first significant event with political leadership.

Over time, as sessions continue, commanders will gain a level of comfort with the forum, although that comfort does not obviate the continued need for careful preparation. A commander should be aware of the image he presents on screen and perform a conscious mental check to avoid coming across like the fictional Colonel Nathan R. Jessep.⁶⁸ The commander will be the master of situational awareness for his battle space, and the presentation he provides must exude that credibility.

Beyond a description of the current state of play, policymakers tend to focus on big picture questions. The commander should be armed with what he does not know and what the best, most likely, and worst-case scenarios are. Because of their different experience sets, senior civilian officials many times ask questions that a commander will not necessarily have the answer to. In these cases, the commander should not hesitate to say that he does not know the answer and will follow up once he researches the topic further. Naturally, the commander should also engender the same environment among the subordinates who routinely brief him, avoiding even the slightest hint that it is preferable to give a specious answer rather than an honest “I don’t know.”

Slides are a double-edged sword; they can be helpful to harried policymakers sorting through numerous issues, but they can also be dangerous in not conveying enough context. Slides have short shelf lives and also risk being seized upon as the gospel, leading to, at worst, a slide that communicated an accurate fact in the past becoming nearly impossible to dislodge from institutional memory even as circumstances change. Consequently, slides should be used sparingly with

policymakers, if at all. What needs to be conveyed across the many miles is the commander's feel and judgment. No one else in Washington has that.

The second implication is the need for more integration with the staffs that reside above the theater commander. This is the same principle that works at lower levels such as the battalion, brigade, and division. While there is no substitute for commander-to-commander communication, effective staffs can work closely with one another to lighten commanders' workloads. The pressure this puts on the chain of command is onerous, given sensitivities about who should talk to whom.

Senior commanders set the ground rules for their staffs and provide expectations to help manage this tension. Some risk to the strict military chain of command is worth accepting in terms of having communal meetings between staffers at the theater, combat command, Joint Staff, and OSD levels, which, obviously, can be conducted by SVTC. The healthy working relationship among key staff members apart from preparation for significant political meetings helps build trust and confidence for the long haul. These meetings are also useful in ferreting out the level of contact from organizations outside the Department of Defense.

Given the nearly insatiable information demand of the NSC staff and Congress, commanders should expect brash staffers to reach out directly to them over email or their staffs to try to garner the latest. The chief danger in these interchanges is that staffers will frequently lack the context that goes with any relevant combat zone fact. Commanders have this context, and should convey it in measured doses either in SVTCs with the Executive and Legislative branches or in visits to theater by senior Administration officials and members of the Congress.

A related point is that “inside the Pentagon” the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Joint Staff, and the pertinent combatant commands will have to work closely together with the theater to establish a corporate position before moving to interagency forums such as Deputies, Principals and NSC meetings. This requirement in fact generates additional internal SVTCs or phone calls ahead of the main meeting. Military leaders owe it to policymakers to try to achieve a corporate position, but this is not always possible. In such cases, policymakers will want to know where the differences lie. Senior military leaders owe it to one another to lay out these differences, transparently, ahead of any White House meeting.

Building routine assessment systems to support higher-level commanders is a third implication. As noted, the commander’s ability to communicate and give a feel for the ground is the chief strength he brings to the policy and resource forum in Washington. As with most military endeavors, building a system to provide routine, cogent updates is one way to help prepare the commander for success. Although organized differently, each theater commander in Iraq had internal systems that helped him maintain and communicate a comprehensive picture of the theater.

Most useful were feeds from subordinate commanders, gathered via email, daily updates, weekly SVTCs, and battlefield circulation. These tactical and operational sensings helped flesh out the commander’s feel for the environment, along with what the U.S. ambassador and embassy staff pulled from the domestic political environment of the host nation. The Iraq commanders also typically had a small internal cell to help put the final touches on products used for briefings, testimony, and speeches. These teams worked closely with the command’s public affairs office and typically consisted of

a mixture of operational officers, strategists, operations research systems analysis specialists, and selected others.

A derivative, partially controversial point is that the commander needs to maintain some situational awareness of domestic political environment in the United States. It is certainly not the job of the commander to be attuned to daily fluctuations in the Washington political landscape, particularly during election season. But he should at least have some feel, which he'll typically get from the Joint Staff, OSD, and Congressional delegation or senior leader visits to the field. It is important to know if the Administration is consumed with any problems in particular, or if there are hard and fast redlines against which not to push without ample reason during policy meetings.

Another facet of this problem is more difficult to detect and even harder to deal with, and that is when commanders are used by one side or the other to score political points. The commander can rarely win in these situations by taking sides. The best approach to take is similar to the way the commander presents himself during the SVTC with political leadership, with a dispassionate distance and a "just the facts" demeanor.⁶⁹

A final implication is for the Department of the Army writ large, and that is for the Army to fight to stay in the conversation and not be sidelined by the "joint" discussions fomented by the new technology. Goldwater-Nichols elevated the combatant commands in zero-sum fashion at the expense of the Services.⁷⁰ In the interagency policy SVTC arena, the Services are generally without a seat at the table, their equities represented instead by the Joint Staff, or to some extent by the combatant commander and theater commander who draw upon Service resources. The system is not likely to change to get the Army a seat at the table, but ground commanders engaged in the

policy arena should recognize this, and be prepared to dual-hat to some extent to help keep Army leadership apprised of key developments.

Conclusion

Commanders naturally prefer distance from the political battles in Washington and favor the autonomy of the operational level of war.⁷¹ Technology has preempted that preference, however, and there is no going back to industrial age practices in today's information era. The pressure on senior commanders may abate in the near-term. Iraq has drawn down to a negligible U.S. presence and Afghanistan portends a similar glide path, into a likely period of American retrenchment and disillusion with extended campaigns of nation building and distant occupation.⁷² History teaches us nonetheless that the cycle of conflict will return. As such, commanders, whenever called to the next front lines or humanitarian crisis, will be put routinely in the same room with key decision makers in Washington's political arena and must be prepared to thrive in that environment.

The advances in communications technology should be no different than the Army's re-mastery of counterinsurgency; we have the embrace the forum and be good at it. Commanders will come under pressure, particularly during wartime, from any Administration trying to exercise control of military operations. Providing forthright, comprehensive assessments directly to the political leadership the American public elected is a professional privilege for any leader called upon to do so.

Endnotes

¹ Presidential Policy Directive 1, "Organization of the National Security Council System," (Washington: The White House, February 13, 2009). In this document, available on the White

House website, the current membership and purpose of the NSC is delineated. Accessed December 4, 2011 at: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/administration/eop/nsc>

² The term “commander-in-chief” was used to identify the heads of the combatant commands until October 2002, at which point Secretary Rumsfeld ended the practice under the rationale that only the President should have the title commander-in-chief. The term subsequently became “combatant commander.” See “Rumsfeld Declares 'CINC' is Sunk,” accessed December 2, 2011 at: <http://usgovinfo.about.com/library/weekly/aacincsunk.htm>.

³ Norman Schwarzkopf, *It Doesn't Take a Hero: The Autobiography of General H. Norman Schwarzkopf* (Westminster, Maryland: Bantam, 1993), 475.

⁴ Tommy Franks, *American Soldier* (New York: Reagan Books, 2004), 430-431.

⁵ For a general overview of each of these systems, see, respectively, <http://www.skype.com>, <http://www.apple.com/mac/facetime/>, and <http://www.tandberg.com>.

⁶ These advances help build upon and reinforce personal contact between commanders and representatives from Washington, either during meetings or testimony when commanders are called to Washington, or during Executive and Legislative branch member visits to the field.

⁷ Recognition of Middle East time zones is generally a planning consideration for NSC staffers as they set up SVTCs with the field, given the seven to eight hour difference. Efforts are generally made to hold meetings in the morning in Washington so as not to keep busy commanders late into the night, even if the effort was not always successful.

⁸ The term “War on Terror” or “Global War on Terror” did not survive the transition of Administrations and has been replaced by the term “Overseas Contingency Operation.” See Scott Wilson and Al Kamen, “Global War On Terror' Is Given New Name,” *The Washington Post*, March 25, 2009, A4.

⁹ See Douglas Feith, *War and Decision: Inside the Pentagon at the Dawn of the War on Terrorism* (New York: Harper, 2008), 457-460. See also Thomas Ricks, *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2006), 254-255.

¹⁰ Ellis, Joseph J.. *His Excellency: George Washington*. Westminster, MD, USA: Knopf Publishing Group, 2004. p 98.

¹¹ John Locke, *The Second Treatise of Government: An Essay Concerning the True Original, Extent, and End of Civil Government*, Thomas Peardon, ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1952.), 4-11.

¹² Alexander Hamilton, “Federalist No. 8,” in Clinton Rossiter, ed., *The Federalist Papers* (New York: Mentor, 1961) 67.

¹³ Hamilton, “Federalist No. 24,” *Ibid.*, 161-162.

¹⁴ James Madison, “Federalist No. 41” *Ibid.*, 256-260. In 1784 the strength of the U.S. Army bottomed out at 80 men. When James Madison was writing, the strength of the regular U.S. Army had increased to 718 men against a total population of just under 4 million. This statistic

helped reinforce the Federalists' point that the militias could overwhelm and defeat the regular army. Most observers would be much less sanguine about that capability today. See Russell Weigley, *History of the United States Army* (New York: Macmillan, 1967) 566. Census data from www.census.gov.

¹⁵ Hamilton, "Federalist No. 8," 68. Most of the recent debate regarding authority over the military started in the late 1960s and has revolved around the War Powers Resolution of 1973. The Resolution sought to reassert congressional oversight and would have required the President to consult with Congress before introducing troops into hostile or imminently hostile situations as well as report to Congress within sixty days if troops were in hostilities without a declaration of war. Most observers agree that the War Powers Resolution has done little to dampen executive discretion and every President has effectively ignored it since President Nixon's veto of the bill was overridden. See Gerald Gunther and Kathleen Sullivan, *Constitutional Law* (Westbury, NY: The Foundation Press, Inc., 1997) 371-374. It seems that Hamilton's prediction was correct, such that a large standing army has grown hand in hand with an imperial presidency, both owing much of their growth to the increased threat in the international environment.

¹⁶ See George Edwards III and Wallace Earl Walker, eds., *National Security and the U.S. Constitution: The Impact of the Political System* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988), for an overview of how the government has sought to reconcile the dearth of guidance in the Constitution with a changed American role in the world.

¹⁷ Samuel Huntington, "American Ideals versus American Institutions," *Political Science Quarterly* (Spring 1982) Vol. 97, No. 1, 1.

¹⁸ Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1957) 15-16.

¹⁹ Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1979) 127-128. Also See Emily Goldman and Richard Andres, "Systemic Effects of Military Innovation and Diffusion," *Security Studies*, Vol. 8, No. 4 (Summer 1999) 83, for an assessment of how quickly emulation should occur under neorealist analysis.

²⁰ Two schools of thought on civil-military theory animate most academic discussion in the United States. The first, based on Samuel Huntington's famous 1957 work, *The Soldier and the State*, op. cit., establishes the control model, treating the military as a profession that should be insulated from undue political opinion and from strategy to a certain extent, left to master the battlefield. Another school of thought, exemplified in Eliot Cohen's work *Supreme Command*, posits that the military cannot unduly separate itself from strategy formulation, even if the civil masters must exercise supremacy and have the final say. Interestingly, during the Iraq war, President Bush, the 43rd President, was photographed with a copy of Cohen's book under his arm. See Eliot Cohen, *Supreme Command: Soldiers, Statesmen, and Leadership in Wartime* (New York: The Free Press, 2002).

²¹ One recent example is Peter Feaver, "The Right to be Right" *International Security*, Volume 35, No. 4 (Spring 2011) 87-125. See also Richard Betts' rejoinder in "Civilians, Soldiers, and the Iraq Surge Decision," *International Security*, Volume 36, No. 3 (Winter 2011/2012) 179.

²² James McPherson, *Tried by War: Abraham Lincoln as Commander in Chief* (New York: Penguin Press, 2008).

²³ D. Clayton James, *Refighting the Last War: Command and Crisis in Korea, 1950-1953* (New York: Free Press, 1993).

²⁴ While the increase in contact between civilian and military leaders in teleconferences can generate tension, much of it internal to the Pentagon, security scholar Richard Betts argues that there has always been perennial civil-military tension in the American system but hardly ever a crisis. Richard Betts, "Are Civil-Military Relations Still a Problem?" in *American Civil-Military Relations: the Soldier and the State in a New Era*, ed. Suzanne Nielsen and Don Snider (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), 41.

²⁵ United States Code, Title 50, Chapter 15, Subchapter I, § 402, "National Security Council," accessed at http://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/50/usc_sup_01_50.html.

²⁶ Presidential Policy Directive 1, "Organization of the National Security Council System," (Washington: The White House, February 13, 2009). Accessed December 4, 2011 at: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/administration/eop/nsc>.

²⁷ See "Statement by the President on the White House Organization for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism," May 26, 2009, accessed February 3, 2012 at http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Statement-by-the-President-on-the-White-House-Organization-for-Homeland-Security-and-Counterterrorism/. See also Helene Cooper, "In Security Shuffle, White House Merges Staffs," *The New York Times*, May 27, 2009, A13.

²⁸ David Rothkopf, *Running the World: The Inside Story of the National Security Council and the Architects of American Power* (New York: BBS Public Affairs, 2005), 6-8.

²⁹ The American public's awareness of any individual on the NSC staff probably peaked during the congressional hearings involving Marine Lieutenant Colonel Oliver North during the Iran-Contra scandal in the Reagan Administration. Even then, the broader public probably did not understand exactly what part of the government North worked in; to boot, his public favorability ratings for conducting an illegal action could be described as alarmingly high, even though those ratings reflected to some degree extant political affiliations. See William Schmidt, "At the Courthouse, the Barber Shop and the Drugstore, They're with North; in Alabama, Pride is Undisguised," *The New York Times*, July 12, 1987, A6.

³⁰ This observation, and those that follow of a similar nature, is based on my experience as a Director for Iraq at the NSC staff (aka NSS) from August 2009 to July 2011, with the recognition that my experience was that of a lower-level staffer during a single administration. My proposition is that the pressures for information are likely a constant across Administrations.

³¹ The most complete treatment of the Goldwater-Nichols Act is James Locher, *Victory on the Potomac: The Goldwater-Nichols Act Unifies the Pentagon* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2002). See also Gordon Lederman, *Reorganizing the Joint Chiefs of Staff: The Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1999), 76-84.

³² The physical layout of the secure video teleconference screens in the White House Situation Room served to diminish further the presence of the combatant commander. Typically

the largest, center screen was filled with by the Iraq commander and ambassador. Considerably smaller screens to the side linked the combatant commander and any other video participants, most typically the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations.

³³ For an overview of the post-Vietnam re-orientation of the U.S. Army, see James Kitfield, *Prodigal Soldiers: How the Generation of Officers Born of Vietnam Revolutionized the American Style of War* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995).

³⁴ The Kurds were always far more favorably pre-disposed to American presence, given the mission after the Gulf War, and the No-Fly zone that had been imposed to prevent Saddam Hussein from carrying out operations against them. The Shi'a Arabs, primarily in Iraq's south, however, had cause to be far more distrustful of Americans, given what they perceived as the failure of the Americans to protect them against Saddam in the aftermath of Desert Storm. Iraq's Sunni Arabs were still reeling from the loss of positions of power and prestige in Iraq to the minority Shi'a.

³⁵ Ricardo Sanchez, *Wiser in Battle: A Soldier's Story* (New York: Harper, 2008), 197.

³⁶ Michael Gordon and Bernard Trainor, *Cobra II: The Inside Story of the Invasion and Occupation of Iraq* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2006), 487-488. See also Sanchez, 168-169.

³⁷ Sanchez, 148.

³⁸ Ricks, *Fiasco*, 158-159, 324.

³⁹ Ricks, *Fiasco*, 179-182. See also L. Paul Bremer III, *My Year in Iraq: the Struggle to Build a Future of Hope* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2006), 186-187.

⁴⁰ Bremer, 104-5.

⁴¹ Jon Anderson, "'Screwdriver' Tweaked Iraq War from Afar," *Stars and Stripes*, October 1, 2004.

⁴² Kenneth Katzman, "Iran's Activities and Influence in Iraq," Congressional Research Service Report for Congress, April 9, 2008. Accessed February 7, 2012 at <http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/104275.pdf>.

⁴³ Sanchez, 407.

⁴⁴ Ricks, *Fiasco*, 66-67; 121-122.

⁴⁵ David Cloud and Greg Jaffe, *The Fourth Star: Four Generals and the Epic Struggle for the Future of the U.S. Army* (New York: Random House, 2009), 164-166.

⁴⁶ Robert Worth, "Blast Destroys Shrine in Iraq, Setting Off Sectarian Fury," *The New York Times*, February 22, 2006. <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/02/22/international/middleeast/22cnd-iraq.html?hp&ex=1140670800&en=1077baccd068bf6b&ei=5094&partner=homepage> (accessed February 7, 2012).

⁴⁷ General Casey's good rapport probably helped him as the Administration backed him to become Chief of Staff of the Army after his service in Iraq, despite a threat from Senator McCain that he might oppose that nomination. See "McCain Voices 'Strong Reservation' For Army Chief Nominee," Fox News, February 1, 2007. Accessed February 3, 2012 at <http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,249301,00.html>.

⁴⁸ Thomas Ricks, *The Gamble: General Petraeus and the American Military Adventure in Iraq* (New York: Penguin Books, 2009), 79-85. See also Kim Kagan, *The Surge: A Military History* (New York: Encounter Books, 2009), 28.

⁴⁹ Sara Wood, "Petraeus Takes Command of Multinational Force Iraq," Armed Forces Press, February 12, 2010. Accessed February 7, 2012 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=3032>.

⁵⁰ The manual was released on December 15, 2006. See Department of the Army, *Field Manual 3-24: Counterinsurgency* (Washington: GPO, 2006) available at <http://www.fas.org/irp/doddir/army/fm3-24.pdf>.

⁵¹ Ricks, *The Gamble*, 190-191.

⁵² Sheryl Gay Stolberg and Jim Rutenberg, "Rumsfeld Resigns as Defense Secretary After Big Election Gains for Democrats," *The New York Times*, November 8, 2006, A1.

⁵³ Ricks, *The Gamble*, 225-226.

⁵⁴ Mark Thompson, "Petraeus Under Heavy Fire," *Time*, September 12, 2007. Accessed February 7, 2012 at <http://www.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,1661011,00.html>.

⁵⁵ Jim Garamone, "Odierno Assumes Command of Coalition Forces in Iraq," September 16, 2008. Accessed February 7, 2012 at http://www.army.mil/article/12470/Odierno_assumes_command_of_coalition_forces_in_Iraq/.

⁵⁶ Thomas P.M. Barnett, "The Man Between War and Peace," *Esquire*, April 2008. Accessed January 31, 2012 at <http://www.esquire.com/features/fox-fallon>.

⁵⁷ See the Iraq timeline on the White House website. Accessed February 6, 2012 at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/iraq/>.

⁵⁸ President Barack Obama, "Responsibly Ending the War in Iraq," speech given at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina on February 27, 2009. Accessed February 7, 2012 at http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Remarks-of-President-Barack-Obama-Responsibly-Ending-the-War-in-Iraq/.

⁵⁹ The White House provides readouts of some of these meetings on its website. See for example <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/03/16/readout-vice-president-biden-s-meeting-iraq>.

⁶⁰ Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation on the End of Combat Operations in Iraq. Accessed February 7, 2012 at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2010/08/31/remarks-president-address-nation-end-combat-operations-iraq>.

⁶¹ Jim Garamone, “‘Lion 6 out; Austin Assumes Command,” September 1, 2010. Accessed February 7, 2012 at <http://www.usf-iraq.com/news/headlines/lion-6-out-austin-assumes-command>.

⁶² The Security Agreement between Iraq and the United States was signed on November 17, 2008 by Ambassador Crocker and Prime Minister Maliki and dictated the removal of U.S. forces by the end of 2011. Many thought at the time there would be a follow-on agreement. It was accompanied by the broader Strategic Framework Agreement, which established a structure for continued cooperation between the United States and Iraq along diplomatic, economic, cultural, and other lines. See Greg Bruno, “U.S. Security Agreements and Iraq,” Council on Foreign Relations Background, December 23, 2008. Accessed February 7, 2012 at <http://www.cfr.org/iraq/us-security-agreements-iraq/p16448>.

⁶³ For one example see “Readout of the Vice President and National Security Advisor’s Meeting with General Austin,” December 10, 2010. Accessed February 7, 2012 at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2010/12/14/readout-vice-president-and-national-security-advisor-s-meeting-with-gene>. See also <http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2011/11/29/vice-president-biden-iraq>.

⁶⁴ Brett McGurk, “Not an End, but a Beginning in Iraq,” The Washington Post, November 3, 2011. Accessed February 7, 2012 at http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/not-an-end-but-a-beginning-in-iraq/2011/11/03/gIQA1jBqjM_story.html.

⁶⁵ See “Homecoming for the Final U.S. Forces Iraq Troops,” on the White House website. Accessed February 7, 2012 at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2011/12/20/homecoming-final-us-forces-iraq-troops>.

⁶⁶ Sanchez, 399.

⁶⁷ Greg Fontenot, E.J. Degen, and David Tohn, *On Point: The United States Army in Operation Iraqi Freedom* (Annapolis, Maryland: Naval Institute Press, 2005), 42-43.

⁶⁸ Though this point is partially exaggerated, the fact stands that fewer and fewer policymakers have any uniformed service and derive at least some of their image of military officers from Hollywood productions, such as Jack Nicholson’s portrayal of an eccentric Marine colonel in 1992’s *A Few Good Men*.

⁶⁹ To some extent facts exist in the eye of the beholder, that is, per philosophical debates, all facts are theory-laden. This academic point applies to commanders required to report in a heated political environment in which separate theories of how the world in general, and the commander’s campaign in particular, works. More specific to the Iraq campaign prior to the Surge, at least two theories competed, one mentioned above that Americans were an irritant and the sooner the transition occurred the better and the other that despite being irritants, additional American help was required with security and reconstruction before Iraq could fully reclaim its sovereignty. An overview of the broader philosophical debate is found in Imre Lakatos, “Falsification and the Methodology of Scientific Research Programmes,” in Imre Lakatos and Alan Musgrave, eds., *Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge* (New York: Cambridge, University Press, 1970) 91-196.

⁷⁰ Locher, 438.

⁷¹ Shimon Naveh, *In Pursuit of Military Excellence: The Evolution of Operational Theory* (Portland, Oregon: Frank Cass, 1997). Naveh's text reveals in depth the effect that developing Airland Battle doctrine had in focusing the U.S. Army on the operational level of war.

⁷² One nuanced view of the United States' fortunes as U.S. power subsides is Fareed Zakaria, *The Post-American World* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2008), 2-4. Zakaria argues that the challenge for America is political rather than economic decline and that as other nations rise, the U.S. role will transition from dominating hegemon to more of an honest broker. See also Gideon Rose, *How Wars End: Why We Always Fight The Last Battle; a History of American Intervention From World War I to Afghanistan* (New York, Simon & Schuster, 2010), 5.